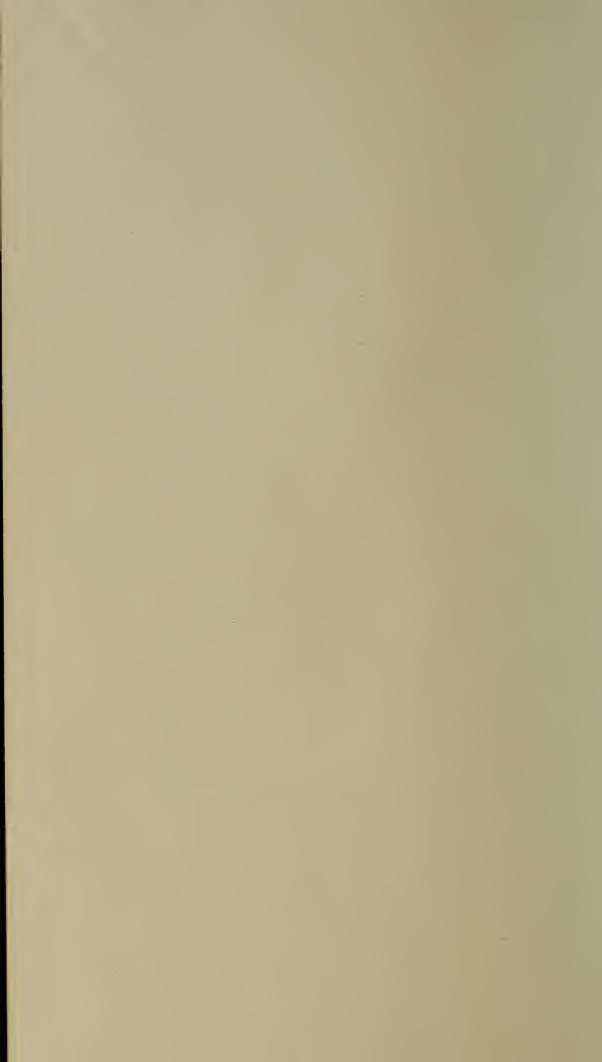


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THE PHILOSOPHY

—OF—

THE LABOR MOVEMENT.

BY FREDERIC A. HINCKLEY.

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The battle of Despotism *versus* Liberty is at least as old as the hills, and it would sometimes seem as eternal. From general political chaos to the divine right of kings was a great step; from the divine right of kings to the divine right of majorities was a greater step; from the divine right of majorities to the divine right of the individual will be the greatest step of all, and presupposes more than one revolution. "I feel that I cannot go wrong when I lean to the side of liberty," was the sublime utterance of the noblest soul Massachusetts ever sent to Washington. Spite of all seeming retrograde movements, mankind are ever gravitating toward justice. Taken at their best, they are seeking freedom in dead earnest. This is the meaning of the reforms, each one of which, so far as it is guided by thought, is a protest against some form of the "barbarism of slavery," and a demand that liberty shall be not only national, but world-wide and universal. Of course all aristocracies, whether of color, intelligence, wealth, or sex, are antagonistic to this idea, and are being, or are to be, overturned. The labor revolution grows naturally out of a condition of things which produces and maintains an aristocracy of wealth.

"The State," said Emerson once, "must consider the poor man, and all voices must speak for him."

That is one of the duties of this hour. In every period of history there is some great fact which stares us in the face, demanding attention and ultimately removal. With us, for thirty years, that fact was chattel slavery; to-day it is poverty. The struggle for the abolition of the second is a natural outgrowth of that which resulted in the abolition of the first. They are as like as father and child, the son possessing all the traits of the sire. Poverty is full of the elements of slavery, extreme wealth of slave-holding. Just as the abolition of slavery carried with it the slave-owner, so the abolition of poverty will carry with it the labor-owner. Justice required that the black man should own himself; it requires that labor shall own itself. Goldsmith wrote wiser than he knew when he said:—

“Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.”

Perhaps he had some slight vision of the time when men should say to their sons, in the old lines of Ben Jonson:—

“Get money; still get money, boy;
No matter by what means.”

It is not hard to see the results of such teaching on every hand. From the man of business who, in the lust for the almighty dollar, gives up all home life, and bolts down his meals in restaurants, to the poor outcast who has no home to eat her meals in, the corrupting influence of a state of society in which (to borrow an expressive phrase) men are “choked with cotton dust and cankered with gold,” is painfully apparent.

Perhaps your next-door neighbor is a millionaire. His elegant mansion is filled with the finest furniture, pictures adorn its walls, and books in abundance lend their inexpressible charm. This man is a large operator in stocks. He has been what is called a lucky fellow, and without working very hard has accumulated a fortune. From his windows he can look out upon a half dozen dilapidated buildings, in which sunlight is unknown, on whose floors are no carpets, on whose walls and tables neither pictures nor books. Filthy, ignorant, half-starved human beings,—that is all they contain. The mansion of wealth and the hovels of poverty side by side,—these are the products

of the highest civilization the nineteenth century can boast. As the poor men and women who rent those miserable abodes pass and repass that stately mansion, going forth from home at daybreak only to return with the setting sun, think you their aspirations for a full development of all their faculties are large? Do they grasp forward for great ideas, for justice, love, mercy? Neither do the pampered family inside those stately halls. Alike in their lack of appreciation of the great realities, an impassable gulf separates them forever, save when they go hand in hand to vote iniquity at the polls. Take it where you will, if you can imagine society divided into three sections—the rich, the middle class, and the poor—you will at once see that the greatest amount of real happiness is to be found in the middle class. In that is the most sobriety, the best education, the largest progress; while, if you seek the strongholds of vice and crime, the abodes of intemperance and prostitution, you go straight to the doors of extreme wealth and poverty. Now if the good things of life are in excess in the middle class, and the bad things preponderate in the other two, it follows that the middle class comes the nearest to the ideal state: in other words, that the abolition of extreme wealth on the one hand and poverty on the other would bring no nearer to a just commonwealth. Directly bearing on this point, Stuart Mill, in his *Autobiography*, referring to a change in his own views from the time when he thought only of mitigating the inequalities of existence, says: "The notion that it was possible to go further than this in removing the injustice—for injustice it is, whether admitting of a complete remedy or not—involved in the fact that some are born to riches and the vast majority to poverty, I then reckoned chimerical, and only hoped that by universal education, leading to voluntary restraint on population, the portion of the poor might be made more tolerable. . . . I now look forward to a time when society will no longer be divided into the idle and the industrious; when the rule that they who do not work shall not eat will be applied not to paupers only, but impartially to all; when the division of the produce of labor, instead of depending, as in so great a degree it now does, on the accident of birth, will be

made by concert on an acknowledged principle of justice; and when it will no longer either be, or be thought to be, impossible for human beings to exert themselves strenuously in procuring benefits which are not to be exclusively their own, but to be shared with the society they belong to. The social problem of the future I now consider to be how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe, and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labor."

Do such views seem visionary to-day? And if so, why? Because to-day the desire for money overrides everything else. Live intemperance, live prostitution, live all manner of wickedness, so you help the powerful to coin dollars and power out of the miseries of the weak!

"Master," said the fisherman, "I marvel how the fishes live in the sea?"

"Why, as men do a-land," was the reply; "the great ones eat up the little ones."

Exactly so; and the labor movement proposes to reform that fact, so far as the men are concerned, by so changing the existing order of things regarding wealth and poverty that there shall be no great ones to eat, and no little ones to be eaten. It recognizes at the start, in the language of its best thinker, that the greatest evil of modern times is poverty; and the abolition of it will be the most important knowledge which can be communicated to mankind. It knows well that poverty is the dead weight on many men's shoulders, keeping them down, and thereby retarding the progress of society. Whatever people do about this demand of labor, one thing is certain:—

"This mournful truth is everywhere confessed:
Slow rises worth by poverty depressed."

Nor must the intimate relation between poverty and extreme wealth be forgotten. The two live or die together. Not more certain is it that the large majority of laboring men receive too little than that the few who constitute in the main the employing class receive too much. The excess in the one case is the result of the deficit in the other. Hence rational labor reform means that the power of accumulated wealth shall be destroyed, and its natural coun-

terpart, poverty, abolished; or in other words it calls for a more equitable distribution of wealth. There is something very forcible in the eloquent and touching little speech which Dickens put into the mouth of Stephen Blackpool, who, his employer said, always had a grievance.

"Look round toun," he said, "so rich as't is—and see the numbers o' people as has been broughten into bein heer, fur to weave, an to card, an to piece out a livin twixt their cradles and their graves. Look how we live, an wheer we live, an in what numbers, and by what chances, an wi what sameness; and look how the mills is awlus agoin, an how they never works us no nigher to ony disant object—ceptin awlus, Death. Look how you considers of us, an writes of us, an how yo are awlus right, and how we are awlus wrong, an never had no reason in us, sin ever we were born. . . . Sir, I canna, in my little learning an my common way, tell what will better aw this, but I can tell yo what I know will never do't. The strong hand will never do't. Agreeing fur to make one side unnat'rally awlus and forever right, and t'other side unnat'rally awlus and forever wrong, will never do't. Most o' aw, ratin 'em as so mooch power, an reglatin 'em as if they was figures in a soom, or machines, wi out loves an likens, wi out memories and inclinations, wi out souls to weary an souls to hope,—this will never do't, sir, till God's work is onmade."

And Stephen might have added, Only one thing will do it, and that is justice. And justice means that in some way or other this man who owns States and controls Legislatures, and this poor woman who, driven by poverty, goes down to hell in North Street, shall be brought under the reign of civilization, and enjoy the benefits of the golden rule. It means the curbing of unjust power, and the lifting up of the ignorant and passionate. It means education, opportunities, aspiration, fair play. In a word and primarily, it means a more equitable distribution of wealth.

Now how shall this distribution be accomplished? Men say, "Suppose you get wealth equally divided, it will all work back again to its present condition. The same causes which have made things as they are will make them so again." Ah, yes; but we propose

to change the causes. True, if Stewart and Vanderbilt are to sit down once a month, or once a year, and distribute their dividends to the less favored, they will have to continue the operation regularly. But that would be the most artificial arrangement in the world, and is an idea promulgated not by the friends but the opponents of labor reform. Labor cares nothing for A. T. Stewart; it cares everything for the system of which he is the fruit. It knows well that he gives of his possessions liberally,—that he establishes lodging-houses for workingwomen, and all that; but it does not like the system which makes it possible for him thus to give, and necessary for the workingwoman thus to receive, his charity. Be it clearly understood, therefore, we have nothing to do with the past, everything to do with the future accumulations of wealth. See the difference. If we operate on that already garnered, we deal inevitably with men, and make mere surface work of it. It is like cropping off the twigs and branches; the roots and trunk are left, and the tree still grows. If, on the contrary, we look to the future, we shall work not upon men but underlying causes and principles, and change them. Or perhaps, more correctly speaking, we shall remove the artificial impediments which man has set up to stop the peaceful operation of natural laws. The great thing is not to abolish Stewart, but so to alter the existing order that such as he shall be impossible in the future. Dig up the roots, and the twigs and branches will take care of themselves. When any one asks, therefore, "What does the labor movement mean?" the answer is plain. It means a more equitable distribution of the proceeds of labor, the abolition, through natural causes, of extreme wealth on the one hand and poverty on the other. And this brings us direct to the question, Under what sort of a system can the relations of capital and labor be based on equity? The answer is contained in one word, CO-OPERATION. Not the combining of one class against another. Not protective unions formed for the saving of a per cent. Circumstances may justify and excuse the one, and prudence and economy lie at the bottom of the other; but both are superficial. The real coöperation is a combining of principles, a protective union of the two vital forces. As Mr. Phillips

has expressed it, Capital and Labor are naturally like the two parts of a pair of scissors. They should be partners, every laborer being a capitalist and every capitalist a laborer.

Herbert Spencer says "that, while the humanity of the remote future will have but one religion, as primitive humanity had but one, we are now living midway in the course of civilization, and have two, which are opposed to each other—the religion of enmity and the religion of amity. The two religions are adapted to two conflicting sets of social requirements. The one set is supreme at the beginning; the other set will be supreme at the end; and a [compromise has to be maintained between them during the progress from beginning to end. On the one hand, there must be social self-preservation in face of external enemies. On the other hand, there must be coöperation among fellow-citizens, which can exist only in proportion as fair dealing of man with man creates mutual trust. Unless the one necessity is met, the society disappears by extinction, or by absorption into some conquering society. Unless the other necessity is met, there cannot be that division of labor, exchange of services, consequent industrial progress and increase of numbers, by which a society is made strong enough to survive."

Evidently, such a harmonious relation is not to be reached in a day, a month, or a year. It is to come naturally and in order. So that although we may talk of coöperation as an end to be sought, it is only as something in the future; it is not, in this broad and radical sense, possible to-day. Before we can consider what the condition of labor will be, when it gets its share of the world's wealth, we must consider its condition here and now. Before we can answer the question, How shall wealth be more equally distributed? we must first answer the question, How is wealth distributed as equally as it is?

This brings us face to face with the wage-system. For our present purposes, it is sufficiently accurate to say that the wealth of the world is distributed through four channels—Profits, Charities, Theft, and Wages; and that by far the larger portion of it is distributed through wages. At all events, what the laborer gets comes through that channel. Now the wage-system

is world-wide, and may be safely taken as the gauge of civilization. That is, to use the language of the *Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, the day's pay of the Chinaman is an index of his idol worship, his patriarchal government, and exclusive policy. The day's pay of the American indicates freedom and a republican or coöperative government. The wage-system is the natural step from barbarism and slavery to coöperation. The passage through it must be a natural growth. The race did not jump from barbarism to wages; it cannot jump from wages to coöperation. It ever moves by the slow but sure process of natural laws.

[First, then, having accepted the fact that so much of the wealth of the world as labor secures comes to it through the wage-channel, we proceed to answer the question, How shall the transition be made from wages to coöperation? by saying that it must be by causing the laborer to receive gradually more and more of wealth in the shape of wages. Or, more exactly speaking, wages must be increased without increasing to a corresponding extent the cost of production. Men must be made dear faster than things.] Plainly, if labor could receive to-morrow fifty per cent. more of the proceeds of its toil in wages than it receives to-day, without having the cost of production so much increased that it would cost it fifty per cent. more barely to live,—that is, if the purchasing power of its wages could be increased,—it would be an advance toward that coöperation which means a more equitable distribution, and is so well illustrated by the scissors. So we come to ask ourselves, What is the law which governs wages? Why have they been steadily increasing for hundreds of years? What will continue the increase in years to come? We answer, The expense of living; or, in plainer phrase, perhaps, the habits of the people. There is no power like habit, especially where education is lacking. The beast does things from habit, and, the more animal man is, the more does he act from the same impulse. Now you cannot teach the mass of men to hoard money. Here and there an individual may, but the majority will spend very nearly what they receive; and, by a law as strong as any in the universe, they will receive, as a whole, about the

amount they spend. That is, their wages and expenditures will be regulated by their habits of living.

Mr. James Hole, in his *Homes for the Working Classes*, writes:—

“That wages are very much regulated by the habits and standard of living of the workman is one of the best established principles in political economy. Inferior habits of living are as much a cause as they are a result of low wages.”

John Stuart Mill says (*Political Economy*, vol. 1, p. 455):—

“No remedies for low wages have the smallest chance of being efficacious which do not operate on and through the minds and habits of the people.”

Hon. Amasa Walker says (*Science of Wealth*, p. 255):—

“There being, then, no uniform and established standard of wages, they vary according to the expenses of subsistence in different countries, and the condition in which the laboring classes are willing to live.”

However these authorities may disagree on other points, they seem to agree on this: that wages represent very nearly the expense of living. Hence the capitalist, looking from his narrow standpoint, says that the ignorant man, the degraded, brute man, is the cheapest laborer. So he is, but he is also the poorest consumer. And he is a cheap laborer because a poor consumer. Increase his wants, and the new slippers, the extra coat, the most superficial of improvements, will tend to raise his whole standard of living. Thus, elevating his habits, you will increase his wages, and, while increasing his wages, will increase his consumption. Making him a dearer laborer, you also make him a better consumer. Making him a better consumer increases by so much the demand for production, and increasing the demand for production naturally makes the manufacture of merchandise cheap. So that while improving the habits of the people will on the one hand increase wages, on the other it will increase the amount of production, and hence diminish rather than increase its cost. Or, in other words, whatever will increase the wants and comforts of a people will increase

wages, without increasing to a corresponding extent the cost of production. If it be urged that wages may be increased without increasing the cost of production, and still the capitalist receive as large or a larger proportion of the profits than now, because of the increase in the amount of production,—that is, that the capitalist may receive a smaller percentage of the profits, and still, by the introduction of machinery and the action of the generally recognized law that it does not cost ten times as much to make ten coats as it does to make one, secure the same lion's share of the proceeds of labor which he now enjoys, and therefore a more equitable distribution of wealth be as far off as ever,—we reply that, the more the habits of the people are improved, the better will they be able to obtain wealth, and use it wisely. The process of education in its broadest sense, which shall take A. B., who lives in that dilapidated ten-foot building at the North End, without carpets, curtains, or tablecloths, surrounded by filth and corruption of every description, and put him into a neat cottage, with plenty of sunlight, furniture, papers, and books,—which shall give his wife a flower garden, and his children a healthy atmosphere,—that process inevitably educates into him more of the ability to secure his share of the wealth of the world. To suppose this to have been done with the thousands of A. B.'s, who “delve from early morn 'til late at eve” for a mere pittance, is to suppose a gigantic stride taken towards coöperation and the more equitable distribution which it signifies.

The objection brought to most of the schemes advanced in behalf of labor is that they fail to recognize the importance of education. The objection is a sound one, and usually well-founded. The twin evil of poverty is ignorance, and education, broad and universal, an absolute necessity. It is the glory and the strength of this theory concerning wages that it is based on that very proposition. It is *the* educational phase of the movement. Its fundamental idea is that the masses must be educated up to better habits of living. No wise man looks upon education as a mere matter of school books. Education means the freest and broadest development of all the facul-

ties. With the mass of men, ground down by poverty, the first step in that development is to better their habits of living.

See that man with ragged clothes and filthy face, his hair uncombed, just enough of his boots left to hold them together. As he walks your streets, he looks ready to go to pieces all at once, like the deacon's "one-horse shay." Put some new shoes on his feet—he begins to see the need of new trousers to go with them; then a new vest, a new coat, and a clean face. Then he goes home; his wife and children need new clothes, too, he thinks. Then his house must be repaired; there must be a carpet on the floor, a table in the room, and by-and-by, when months, perhaps years, of such reform have gone on, he will come home some night with the *Herald* or *Times*. Then his taste for reading will begin. He won't read Charles Sumner's speeches at first; more likely the doings of the Police Court. But he will have begun the habit of reading. So we might follow him through a long life of such gradual improvement. Well, that is education, broad and substantial; the natural, logical way to abolish ignorance and its attendant evils, such as intemperance and prostitution. It is precisely the education which forms the grand base of this whole theory of increasing wages by raising to a higher level the habits of the people, creating in them new wants, enabling them to secure new comforts. Am I not right, then, in claiming this as the educational phase of the labor movement, and in summoning to its support the men and women whose minds are broad enough to see, and whose hearts are warm enough to feel, that this is the education which the world needs? Had I ten thousand tongues, each one gifted with the eloquence of O'Connell, they should all say, "Improve the habits of the masses, that they may be dearer laborers and better consumers; that thus, by naturally increasing wages and production, a more equitable distribution of wealth may be attained."

This, then, is the touchstone to which all measures proposed on behalf of labor must be brought. Every means by which the habits of the masses can be improved, their wants increased, their style of living raised to a higher level, and thus wages naturally in-

creased without a corresponding increase in the profits of capital,—every such means is to be accepted. Of all the measures proposed, the two which most fully and clearly come under this head are *the ballot for woman* and a *reduction of the hours of labor*. Let us briefly consider each of these. Take the ballot for woman. If a careful observer of men and things were asked what is the most scandalous fact of the century, he would be forced to reply, The condition of the workingwoman. She is doubly enslaved. She suffers first, as all women do and as workingmen do not, from the old and barbarous idea, not yet outgrown, of the inferiority of the female sex, and its consequent subordination to the male; and, second, she suffers as all workingmen do, and as other women do not, from the old and equally barbarous idea of the degrading influences of labor, and the consequent subordination of the laboring to the capitalist class. She is not only a woman, but a laboring woman. She is not only a laborer, but a woman laborer. She is the subject of two aristocracies; one of sex, the other of wealth. She must be emancipated from both. The heavy oppression which cuts her off from her share of the world's opportunities, and refuses to open to her all the avocations of life, will not be overcome until both the labor and the woman's rights movements conquer. The triumph of the former will simply place her in the category with other women. The success of the latter will only put her on the same platform with the workingmen. The friends of woman, therefore, may well insist that she shall have time and room in which to grow, and the friends of labor will be false to her highest interests if they do not insist upon her having the ballot, that with it she may demand her own rights, and speak on all public questions for herself. The ballot means for her the opening of a career; the opening of a career means a change in all her habits of living; and a change in all her habits of living means a larger share of the proceeds of her labor. I recall with no small degree of satisfaction the admirable words of the *Report of the Bureau of Statistics for 1871*:—

“The workingwoman (in common with all other women) should be at once endowed with her rightful political equality. This will do more towards purify-

ing the social state, and correcting the evils under which she suffers, than volumes of statutes. The vilest man can further his villainy at the ballotbox; the purest and noblest woman cannot protect her smallest right thereby. The tyranny that oppresses her is strengthened by her own disfranchisement, and makes her impotent to defend her own prerogatives."

The ballot, then, is an instrument in the hands of the workingwoman for securing a more equitable distribution of wealth, through the wage-channel. It is the columbiad of which Mr. Sumner speaks, that shall make her a full-armed monitor.

Again: take the measure of a reduction of the hours of labor. Not necessarily ten hours or eight hours (by-and-by it may be six or four), but a *reduction* of the hours of labor. That means more leisure for the working classes,—room in which to grow,—time for the making of *men*. This demand raises man above all consideration of manufactures or commerce, and calls for the largest development of humanity. In other words, it says, Secure through wages that better distribution of wealth which shall lead to coöperation, by improving the habits of the people; by that broad education which means the fullest possible development of all the faculties. Now to claim that a man is open to such an education who has time only to work, eat, and sleep, who leaves home at daylight only to return at night utterly exhausted, is simply an absurdity. To quote from a recent writer, himself a mechanic, the present system of long hours means, so far as labor is concerned, "to get up in the morning at five o'clock, cook and eat a hasty breakfast, run perchance to catch the cars, go off into a corner to eat a cold dinner from a basket, and to reach home at seven in the evening, used up bodily and mentally. What opportunity is there here for recreation and culture? There is a great deal said about parental influence. The influence of a father who goes to his work before his little children are up, and returns to his home to find them sound asleep, is certainly mild in its nature."

Such is the testimony of a man speaking from practical experience. Can we not all of us endorse what he says? Do we not know that to improve even an hour, from eight to nine in the evening, in reading

and culture, we must come to it with unwearied limbs and a fresh, active brain? How can you expect a man who labors at the forge or tends the shuttle from sunrise to sunset to be in a condition outside his working hours for anything but sleep? Ah, but you say, Look at Elihu Burritt, at Theodore Parker, and a host of others who have sought knowledge over the midnight oil, and scaled mountains of obstacle almost against fate itself. True; but you forget that these men are the exceptions, giants who come only once or twice in a generation. Would it be fair to gauge the speed of all horses by the Arabian charger, or to condemn the deer on Boston Common because not so fleet of foot as in their God-given mountain home? Still less is it fair to compare all immortal souls with the great intellectual and moral masters, who seem by nature to grasp the very eternities. It may be creditable to the exceptional man that by superhuman effort he achieves success, but it can be no discredit to the mass of mankind that under unfavorable circumstances they fail to do likewise. We must take men as we find them. Shall we say to the workingmen, Go to work, keep contented, "sit up late o' nights," and become Theodore Parkers? We might as well talk to stones; and why? Because there isn't the stuff there out of which Theodore Parkers are made.

See now where this train of thought brings us. Either we must say that the masses are poor, worthless trash, good only as hod-carriers and tenders of machinery, and so to be left as they now are in ignorance, or that our social arrangements must be so changed to meet their wants as to give them time and opportunity for education and culture. We can neither dig under them nor fly above them. We must either entirely ignore them or meet them where they are. To ignore them means—a servile class, and ultimately despotism. To meet them, take them by the hand, lift them up, teach them to lift themselves up, is the only republican way, and therefore for us, who long since in name adopted republican institutions, the only alternative. Now if we are to meet them, it must be at points where they most need help; and inasmuch as their present hours of labor shut them off from education, we must not go

to them, saying, "Leopard, change your spots!" or, "Mountain, move!" but, like sensible men, meeting the demand squarely and fairly, we must shorten the hours. Increase the leisure, and fill it to the brim and running over with opportunities. Men talk about education as if that were the great thing; and, broadly viewed, it is. But time and opportunities must precede even that narrow thing which people call education, which consists of a little arithmetic, a smattering of grammar, and a weak show of so-called accomplishments. How much more are they necessary as the forerunners of that truer idea of education, which means the full development of all our faculties, the steady growth of character!

To the objection that the time, if given, will be spent uselessly, perhaps in the grog-shop, it is to be said that, if that be really so, so much the worse for this boasted civilization of ours, which allows such ignorance to exist, and provides so many school-houses called bar-rooms for the teaching of such immorality. But is it really so? Would the time be thus spent? Is it not a safe principle of action that *opportunities given are opportunities improved*? We have carried books and schools to the freedmen at the South, and reports from all quarters show how gratefully every opportunity thus given is embraced. The city of Boston has opened free evening schools, and the crowds unable to gain admittance testify that here, too, opportunities given are opportunities improved. Carry the principle a little further. Give with wise, generous purpose more time and greater opportunities, will the heavens fall? Will more liquor be sold? No, the heavens will remain secure, and less liquor be dispensed; for the laws of the universe will remain unchanged, and the stimulus of culture supersede the stimulus of grog. The following letter received in Anniversary Week of 1872 is too valuable to be omitted in this connection:—

SENATE CHAMBER, 25 May, 1872.

Gentlemen,—I cannot take part in your public meetings, but I declare my sympathy with workingmen. In their aspirations for greater equality of condition and increased opportunities I unite cordially. Therefore I insist that the experiment of an eight-hour law in the national workshops shall be tried, so that, if

successful, it may be extended. Here let me confess that I find this law especially valuable because it promises more time for education and general improvement. If the experiment is successful in this respect, I shall be less curious on the question of pecuniary profit and loss, for to my mind the education of the human family is above dollars and dividends. Meanwhile accept my best wishes, and believe me,

Faithfully yours,

CHARLES SUMNER.

Such is the legacy the great statesman left a cause in which he was fast becoming interested, and of which, had his life been spared, he would sooner or later have been an earnest advocate.

Now, to put the whole question in a nutshell, let us say:—

1st. Poverty is the great fact with which the labor movement deals.

2d. Its abolition means also the abolition of extreme wealth, and every approximation thereto a more equitable distribution of wealth.

3d. This distribution can never be accomplished by artificial means dealing with the accumulations of the past, but must be sought through the peaceful operation of natural laws, making such accumulations impossible in the future.

4th. All efforts to this end will ultimately result in coöperation, which is the only basis for a just relation between capital and labor.

5th. The greater portion of the world's wealth is now distributed through the wage-system, and every increase of wages which comes from better habits of living will effect a still more equitable distribution, and ultimately result in coöperation. Those measures are to be selected, therefore, which peacefully and naturally tend to this result.

6th. Since the ballot in the hands of the working-woman means for her opportunities and the opening of a career, it will thus increase her wages; and to this end she, in common with all other women, should be at once endowed with the elective franchise.

7th. A reduction of the hours of labor means time for improvement, and is the essential and natural way into that education which means better habits of

living. As a first step, its importance cannot be over-rated. It is the primary school of labor reform.

8th. The twin evil of poverty is ignorance, and education of the head, heart, and hands is a necessity. Every advance made toward the abolition of the one is a blow at the other, as well as at intemperance, prostitution, and general crime. The labor movement, thus understood, takes its place as first among the educational forces of our time.

Such, it seems to me, is the philosophy of labor reform. It proposes to teach a knowledge never learned of schools; a knowledge that shall make human life truer to the highest ideals. And it begins where common sense dictates; not up in the clouds calling to the wingless mortals upon this sordid earth to fly, but to the men who are intellectually or morally crawling on their knees it proposes to teach the science of walking. The ballot, it says, means feet for the workingwoman; shortening the hours means feet for all labor. Feet mean improvement of habits of living. Improvement of habits of living means an increase of wants and an increase of real worth, and these effect an increase of wages, through those natural causes which shall bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth.

I said this was a movement which signified revolution. Do you realize, ladies and gentlemen, what that means? It is the gradual growth of the principle of freedom, here and there asserting itself, sometimes in peace, sometimes in war, but always to achieve final success. "There is an irrepressible conflict," said Mr. Seward, "between freedom and slavery." There was one. How many homes can testify to that now! There is an irrepressible conflict between freedom and poverty. Shall we be wise in time, or shall we invoke here, too, the hard hand of war? It seems to me it is for the brains and hearts of the nineteenth century to decide. There are strikes, the outcome of ignorance and passion, the forerunners of conflict,—not, as some think, an utter abomination, nor yet the exclusive property of labor. They have been indulged in in all ages and by all classes. When the clerk says to the merchant, "I must have an increase of salary or leave your employ," he strikes. When the merchant says to the clerk, "Henceforth you must

work for a reduced salary or leave my employ," he strikes. Ministers strike, societies strike, and when labor strikes without appealing to force, it acts upon the same principle, and with quite as much, if not more, excuse; for it knows no better way. Ground down by poverty, it can neither dictate nor argue. There is the whirling machinery before its eyes, which weaves out of the raw material and its drudgery the fabric which capital shall sell and buy. It sees but one way to relieve itself for a single hour, and adopts it. It clogs the wheels; it stops the machine; and then the cultured and so-called religious classes pronounce it barbarous that these ignorant and pestilent fellows should do the only thing they have left it in their power to do. I say *they*, the cultured and religious classes, because if the state of poverty and ignorance out of which strikes grow exists in the community, they are most responsible for it who, with abundance of wealth and a large degree of knowledge, might do the most, if they would, to prevent it. As it is, labor has no reason to expect sympathy from such quarters. It fights its own battles, therefore, with the one clumsy weapon it possesses, and, so far as any large result is concerned, generally fails. The truth is, one is rarely in a condition to strike successfully, unless in a condition to do something much better than strike. Especially is this true of labor. Unless in striking its demand is at once complied with, it must lie idle for weeks, perhaps months. Usually it does not possess pecuniary ability enough for more than one or (at the outside) two weeks' support. After that it must beg, steal, starve, or surrender, the chances being that the last will be the most difficult thing to do. In the meantime, its antagonist, capital, can hold out for months, perhaps years, shut up its shops, go home and live on the interest of its money; every want gratified, at all events, every necessity met. What an unequal contest! Ease and luxury *versus* starvation. The majority of strikes reduce the battle to just that point. They enable capital to stand, not like the highway robber, with grip upon the throat, demanding, "Your money or your life!" but with clenched fists and closed money-drawers to exclaim, "Come to terms, brutes, or die!"

While, therefore, the class does not exist which has a right to criticise labor because it strikes, it is nevertheless the duty of every thoughtful man and woman to teach it a better and nobler way. And the first lesson in this department of knowledge must be from the text book of exact justice. In other words, thought must develop and expound the underlying philosophy of the movement, substituting its own peaceful and more effective methods for those of contention and ill-will.

Many of these same objections apply to the method of politics even more popular now than the method of strikes. As at present constituted, politics are given over to fraud and corruption. It is a simple impossibility for a new question to get anything but the most superficial discussion from parties and politicians. Now, every cause must have its era of thorough discussion; its philosophy must be studied and plainly set forth, before any salient points can be arrived at, upon which to found a political party. That the labor question, like every other so vital to national welfare, must sooner or later be carried to the ballotbox, is of course true. That is the democratic way of settling customs and laws; but after all a political party simply records public opinion, and the ballotbox is the place where the record is made. If, as Whittier sings,

"The crowning fact, the kingliest act of freemen,
Is the freeman's vote,"

as true is it that brains and hearts inspiring that vote are "the power behind the throne, greater than the throne itself." The party, and all that goes with it, must be subordinated to the idea. Only as it serves that is it fit to live. To change the figure, parties are mile-stones, not leaders. They mark, as one has said the Church marks, the place up to which humanity has travelled at a given time. Back of, and greater than, parties is the moral agitation of ideas which shall mould them to its purposes and make intelligent political action possible. Agitation, therefore, is the great power in a republic, and it is that to which I would summon the thought of the hour. Strikes, let me repeat, mean war; political action uncurbed by thought means war; moral agitation, greater and deeper and truer than both combined—that, and

that alone, holds out the only reasonable hope of peace. Not only as a sympathizer with labor, but as a non-resistant, as one who with O'Connell would welcome no social amelioration at the cost of a single drop of blood, I plead for that. As you value peace, as you value the future of the American experiment in democratic institutions, I urge you to study and investigate the demands of labor. For this problem is thoroughly national in its aims and scope. Aye, more than national: it holds in its keeping the future of the democratic idea. There is no logical terminus between barbarism and freedom, and, whether we will or not, we are on the high road to a pure democracy. Our fathers, wiser than they knew, declared principles good for all time. Our national troubles have all come from departing from the plain propositions they so well laid down. If we are to live as a nation, one after another of the usurpations of which we have been guilty must be abolished. There can be no aristocratic class in a pure democracy, whether of the skin, of intelligence, nativity, condition, or sex. The slave-holding aristocracy, founded on the color of the skin, has been destroyed. The aristocracy of wealth and the aristocracy of sex must follow. The labor movement is an organized protest against the one,—to some extent, as I think, against the other also. Its demands, so far as they are guided by thought, are not unreasonable; they only ask the republic to be true to its own ideals.

Pardon me if I say in all seriousness that the thoughtful men and women of to-day have a duty to this cause which must not be, cannot be, safely neglected. They may or may not accept my views, but they must study and investigate to the end that they may form views for themselves. How many of the absurdities now advanced in the name of labor would be swept away, if only a dozen thinking men and women in every town in Massachusetts would give it that attention to which it has a just claim. It will never do to excuse yourselves by saying it is agrarian, and crude, and despotic. If it really is so, all the more necessity that you, who are neither agrarian, nor crude, nor despotic, should give it the benefit of your practical, developed, liberty-loving natures. This great idea of freedom in the course of progress is to

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receive new meaning. Confront the fact of poverty with it! It shall in time dissolve like icebergs under the tropic suns.

"To honor justice, and to love the right,
Which friends to friends and State to State unite,
Be ours. We honor equal aims and ends;
But still the greater with the less contends,
And evil times begin."

There is much talk now-a-days of public corruption. What is the real meaning of *crédit mobiliers*, and salary grabs, and the general low tone of life in official circles? Do you think you can abolish dishonesty in Congress by reforming a few Representatives? Not at all. John Morrissey in the House of Representatives means a constituency of John Morrisseys in New York. Poverty and wealth, we have said, never join hands, save when they go together to vote iniquity at the polls. It is the lust of wealth on the one hand, and the ignorance of poverty on the other, which makes the demagogue's election sure. Whoso would abolish demagogues, let him make education and an honest living possible to all. A reform of the civil service is one of the prominent party watchwords of the day. But the reform needed is the introduction of common honesty into all departments of the government, from the White House down. This will hardly come so long as business is run on the principle of seeing how much each man can cheat his neighbor without being found out. Public men are neither better nor worse than the average public sentiment. A business and general industrial system rotten to the core finds its legitimate fruit in knaves and buffoons in public life, for whose misdeeds your cheeks and mine tingle with shame. With noisy demonstrations they stump States and manipulate legislation, all in the name of the highest principle, while, blind to the wrongs of a large majority of the people.

"They bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free;
License they mean, when they cry liberty."

And licensed they are to prey upon the public treasury and corrupt the public morals by those evil influences in social and industrial life of which they are the legitimate representatives. The labor movement

does not cover the whole of God's truth; but it means the diffusion of general intelligence and honesty, by destroying the conditions which make ignorance a necessity and corruption a plant of easy growth. When this is done, the demagogue will find himself without a constituency, and the public service cease to be so largely at the mercy of thieves who break through and steal.

"The discipline of slavery is unknown
Amongst us,—hence the more do we require
The discipline of virtue; order else
Cannot subsist, nor confidence, nor peace.

* * * * *

Trust not to partial care a general good;
Transfer not to futurity a work
Of urgent need. Our country must complete
Her glorious destiny. Begin even now,

* * * * *

Now, when corruption is a prime pursuit,
Shew to the several nations for what end
The powers of civil polity were given."

It is to such an educational work that the labor movement calls. Said I not rightly it is truly national in its aims and scope? Freedom is constructive, poverty destructive, of all those elements which make a nation truly great. That is what labor says. Its summons is already ringing in your ears. Sooner or later it will be heard. The sooner the better! For in answering its call the Republic of States shall become the democracy of the people, and, marching bravely forward and upward, lead the world to freedom.





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